

CIA OPERATION CENTER

Approved For Release 2004/08/30 : CIA-RDP91M00696R000700110024-2

Date. 15 Dec

Item No. 9

Ref. No.

NEWS SERVICE

DISTRIBUTION II

NIGHTLEAD BUSH

BY WILLIAM SCALLY

WASHINGTON, DEC 15, REUTER - GEORGE BUSH PROMISED TODAY HE WOULD LEAVE POLITICS BEHIND HIM IF CONFIRMED AS NEW DIRECTOR OF THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY BUT HE STOPPED SHORT OF SAYING HE WOULD REFUSE NOMINATION AS A VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE.

MR BUSH, A FORMER MEMBER OF CONGRESS AND REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CHAIRMAN, TOLD THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE, "I CANNOT IN ALL HONESTY TELL YOU THAT I WOULD NOT ACCEPT" A VICE PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION.

AT LEAST TWO DEMOCRATIC MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE, SENATORS GARY HART OF COLORADO AND PATRICK LEAHY OF VERMONT STRONGLY INDICATED THEY BELIEVED MR BUSH'S POLITICAL PAST DISQUALIFIED HIM AS HEAD OF THE CIA.

BUT BOTH SAID THEY HAD NOT YET MADE UP THEIR MINDS WHICH WAY THEY WOULD VOTE ON THE NOMINATION.

NIGHTLEAD BUSH 2 WASHINGTON

A THIRD POSSIBLE OPPONENT OF THE NOMINATION, SENATOR HENRY JACKSON (DEMOCRAT, WASHINGTON), DID NOT ATTEND THE CONFIRMATION HEARING TODAY.

MR BUSH, A 51-YEAR-OLD FORMER TEXAS OIL MILLIONNAIRE, WAS CHIEF OF THE U.S. LIAISON MISSION IN PEKING WHEN PRESIDENT FORD NAMED HIM TO SUCCEED WILLIAM COLBY AS HEAD OF THE CIA AT A TIME WHEN THE AGENCY HAS BEEN REELING FROM DISCLOSURES OF IMPROPER CONDUCT IN THE PAST.

A NUMBER OF MEMBERS OF CONGRESS HAVE EXPRESSED FEARS THAT HE WOULD POLITICIZE THE AGENCY OR WOULD SOON QUIT TO RUN FOR PUBLIC OFFICE. PRESIDENT FORD HAS REFUSED TO RULE OUT MR BUSH AS A VICE PRESIDENTIAL POSSIBILITY.

IN A STATEMENT TO THE COMMITTEE, MR BUSH SAID THAT IF CONFIRMED HE WOULD PRESENT RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE PRESIDENT WITHOUT POLITICAL TILT.

HE DESCRIBED AS OUTRAGEOUS AND MORALLY OFFENSIVE CIA ABUSES BROUGHT TO LIGHT BY CONGRESSIONAL INVESTIGATIONS AND SAID HE WOULD SEEK TO SEE SUCH ABUSES WERE ELIMINATED.

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OVER

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MR BUSH SUGGESTED THAT POLITICAL JUDGMENT -- RESPECT FOR THE PEOPLE AND THEIR SENSITIVITIES -- MIGHT HAVE PREVENTED ABUSES IN THE PAST.

DURING QUESTIONING BY THE COMMITTEE, MR BUSH REFUSED TO RULE OUT CIA INVOLVEMENT IN SUPPORTING FOREIGN COUPS, IN PARAMILITARY OPERATIONS OR IN PROVIDING MONEY FOR POLITICAL PARTIES.

SENATOR LEAHY TOLD MR BUSH HE BELIEVED THAT A MAN WHOSE BACKGROUND WAS PREVIOUS POLITICAL WAS NOT A GOOD CHOICE AS CIA DIRECTOR.

SENATOR HART SAID THE APPOINTMENT OF A POLITICAL PERSON ESTABLISHED A TROUBLING PRECEDENT.

REUTER 1425